

Nixon

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cases and a series of letters in others. "These names were never on the (CIA) watchlist, so it is obvious that in the opening of mail they have gone very far afield indeed."

Church turned to James Angleton, the CIA's former counterintelligence chief, to ask why the agency found it necessary to open the letter to Nixon.

"I would say it was very much in error," Angleton replied.

But Angleton insisted the overall operation had been valuable. He cited leads it provided in the still unsuccessful pursuit of Kathy Boudin, a woman allegedly seen running from an explosion which destroyed the Greenwich Village bomb factory of the Weathermen, a radical leftist group, on March 6, 1970.

"When we went back through the mail program letters we found she had written from Moscow 30 to 40 letters to people in the United States," Angleton said. "These were the only leads the FBI had. She's still a fugitive. It raises in anyone's mind the question of whether she's in Moscow."

But Church said the program's value must be balanced against the harm it did to the constitutional rights of American citizens.

The possibility of calling Nixon by subpoena to testify was raised by Sen. Gary Hart, D-Colo., who said the former chief executive was the best source as to whether his administration indulged in unlawful domestic spying.

But Vice Chairman John Tower, R-Tex., said after the decision was made in closed session that the panel did not wish to "escalate the rhetoric" and possibly provoke a court case by issuing a subpoena.

A Nixon lawyer, Herbert J. Miller Jr., said he would not speculate as to whether Nixon would appear before the committee voluntarily. Miller said he would meet with the committee's counsel to discuss the matter.

Also on Wednesday, Nixon was ordered by a federal judge to answer questions under oath in a civil suit brought by former national security aide Morton Halperin, who was wiretapped for 21 months.

Nixon's attorneys said in that instance they would check with the former President to see if he wanted to appeal the ruling.

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CIA snooped at Nixon's mail

WASHINGTON (AP) — The CIA secretly and illegally read the mail of many prominent Americans and opened at least one letter addressed to Richard M. Nixon before he became president, the chairman of the Senate Intelligence Committee said Wednesday.

Later in the day, the panel agreed unanimously to ask Nixon to testify in its wide-ranging probe of improper activities by U.S. agencies.

Chairman Frank Church, D-Idaho, said committee members felt Nixon himself was the "best witness" in a number of areas, including questions surrounding the short-lived Houston plan to give intelligence agencies sanction to break the law at times.

Nixon is not being called under subpoena, and Church would not say when or in what manner Nixon might appear.

Earlier, Church disclosed that in June 1968 the agency opened and read a letter, which commented on Nixon's prospects in that year's presidential election, written by Nixon speechwriter Raymond Price while traveling in the Soviet Union.

And Church said that one of his own letters, written to his mother-in-law from the Soviet Union, was included in correspondence found by his committee's staff while probing the CIA mail-opening operation — a project

which was begun in 1952 and not closed down until Feb. 15, 1973.

Church's first statement on the matter Wednesday morning offered no detail but implied a wider scope to the mail surveillance than he later outlined.

In part he said, "We want to know why the CIA opened the mail of organizations such as the Ford Foundation, Harvard University, and the Rockefeller foundation or why mail to and from persons such as (Federal Reserve Chairman) Arthur Burns, Rep. Bella Abzug, Jay Rockefeller, Martin Luther King Jr., Richard Nixon himself, Hubert Humphrey and Edward Kennedy ... should have been regularly opened and scrutinized by the CIA."

An aide subsequently questioned by reporters said at first that Nixon mail had been opened both before and during his tenure as president — and that mail of other presidents had been scrutinized as well. The aide later withdrew that statement, saying he had misunderstood committee investigators, and Church himself confirmed the narrower version.

Church said that all the letters intercepted by the CIA were either sent from Communist Bloc countries or mailed from the United States to persons in those nations.

He said the mail files on prominent persons included single letters in some

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